

Coins

Why wait? Today's a fine time to start collecting

By Roger Boye

"STARTING A COIN collection today is the pits," writes a discouraged 15-year-old Chicago collector who has had little luck in finding coins minted before 1965 from his pocket change.

"There's nothing in circulation today except for the new pennies, nickels, and clad coins. I'm ready to give up," he said in a two-page, handwritten letter.

Before the youth spends his small collection, he should consider the advice of Richard S. Yeo, the hobby's elder statesman.

"When people ask me when to start collecting, I always answer 'Today.' Never do I meet a

collector who doesn't say, 'If only I had started collecting when I was younger,' " Yeo said in a recent interview. The author of the Red Book and other basic hobby references is known to millions of collectors by his pen name of Yeoman.

Yeo, 74, began collecting coins in much the same way as the Chicago youth, and he's happy he didn't quit along the way.

Yeo admitted that it is difficult to find old coins in circulation today because of the increasing number of persons who check their change for the special dates. But he quickly added that the coins in circulation during one era are often the collecting scarcities during the next era.

"Since the government took silver out of coins (1965 for dimes and quarters), collectors have been less eager to save the newly minted coins. I don't think that many new coins from the late '60s or early '70s are being preserved," he said.

THE FOUNDER and former editor of Numismatic Scrapbook magazine, Lee F. Hewitt, was one of several area collectors honored at the 1978 American Numismatic Association convention in Houston.

Hewitt was elected to the Numismatic Hall of Fame, set up by the ANA in 1968 to honor distinguished numismatists. He has published several books on coins, and did much work in the mid-1930s to convince government officials to

resume proof coin production. The U.S. Mint made few proof coins from 1916 to 1936.

(Yeo, who lives in Green Valley, Ariz., was the other living person named to the hall of fame during the convention.)

Paul R. Whitnah, 31, was one of five persons awarded the ANA's prestigious Medal of Merit, given in recognition of his several years of work with the ANA's Young Numismatist Committee, and other contributions.

Donn Pearlman, reporter and anchorman for WBBM Newsradio, received an "outstanding award" certificate for a five-part series on collecting that aired last April during National Coin Week. He was the only individual so honored.